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ABSTRACT

Of the four universities within the Province of Alberta, the University of Calgary has most effectively met the bicultural needs of Native students. Athabasca University's correspondence courses are usually not effective for Native students. The University of Alberta's "Morningstar" program allows teacher certification before completion of degrees and offers its course off-campus in an Indian controlled institution: of the 37 students completing the 2-year training, 24 have taught for at least a year and 13 (some included in the 24) have completed their degrees: these 13 exceed the total number of Native teachers in the Province when the project began. The University of Lethbridge has, in association with the Blackfoot Tribe, created a department of Native American Studies and has a full-time student advisor on its staff: since the establishment of the department, 23 Native students have graduated in all disciplines. The University of Calgary offers support services for Native students in regular programs. Presently, two full-time tutor/advisors (one a Native person) assist students. A student lounge, the Red Lodge, fosters Indian identity. The fact that almost all of the 38 graduates since 1976 are working in the service of their people indicates acceptance of the graduates and the University of Calgary's program by native Indian communities in Alberta. (CM)

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THE SUPPORT SERVICE APPROACH TO UNIVERSITY EDUCATION FOR NATIVE STUDENTS IN ALBERTA

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In the Province of Alberta there are, in round numbers, two million persons deriving from the immigration of the last one hundred years. In addition there are one hundred thousand people whose primary identity is with the indigenous peoples. Of this one hundred thousand, approximately one third have legal status under the federal Indian Act and for the most part live on reserves. The remaining two thirds (generally called Metis) have special status only as extremely impoverished persons and that usually only in those cases where they are resident on Metis settlements. A provincial government determinedly opposed to affirmative action has made it difficult for university projects to maintain equality in opportunity for all groups of Native students (the term Native is designed to indicate all groups). Despite the prosperity and educational leadership in Canada of the Province of Alberta, innovation in education by or on behalf of Native people has been almost non-existent until this decade.

In 1975 there were only a dozen identified status Indian graduates from all universities of the Province. Only a handful of Native students had reached Grade XII and ever those rarely achieved University entrance. Put briefly assimilationist system of schooling could not hold Native children within its classrooms. In May of 1980, 14 Grade VII children were in attendance at the Fort Chipewyan school and 26 were roaming the town. At the beginning of the decade, although oil wealth had not yet come to the group of reserves which are now prospering, there was a rising tide of expectation.

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Paper presented at the 1981 meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Los Angeles, California, April 13-17.

Something of the American human rights movement of the sixties was found in Canada in the seventies and with it a consciousness in at least parts of the university system that the universities should reach out to this disadvantaged clientele and as far as was possible should accommodate the cultural difference of the Native person as student. By the end of the decade this orientation was consciously formulated in the Native Students Services of The University of Calgary as a policy of support for Native declarations of biculturalism, ie. support for the addition of the behaviors of mainstream professionals to the existing repertoire of behaviors of the Native person rather than the replacement through assimilation of Native culture by mainstream culture.

Within the Province of Alberta there are four Universities. Athabasca University provides only distance learning and for the most part its correspondence courses do not provide a learning mode compatible with the learning style and family circumstances of Native students. It has one present Native graduate but it also has an on-site program in administration at an Indian education centre, Blue Quills and graduates are expected soon from that program.

The University of Alberta (the largest in the Province) in recent years has maintained a small politically oriented office of Indian Affairs on campus and this has more recently developed support services for Native students on campus. The major thrust of the University of Alberta in Native education, however, has been the "Morningstar" project in association with the Blue Quills Indian Education Authority about a hundred miles north east of the city of Edmonton. By special arrangements (initially strongly opposed by officers of the Alberta Teachers' Association) a teacher's certificate

could be acquired on completion of two of the four years of the B.Ed. degree. The complete degree was to be finished within a further five years. Instruction was provided by visiting professors in concentrated periods, usually of three or four weeks duration. While there are facilities for residence most students have been drawn from the commuting area and there are suggestions that, for this reason, population will not warrant the recruitment of a fourth cohort in Education when the present group have completed their studies. By offering its program in a rearranged sequence to permit study of teaching methods before certification at the end of two (and with the third cohort, three) years, by offering the course off-campus and in an Indian controlled institution The University of Alberta has provided for 37 Native students an entry into the profession of teaching which they would not otherwise have had. It is only this year (1981) that the first cohort will complete the five year period after certification allowed for completion of degrees and it is premature therefore to comment on the effect of "Morningstar" in creating a cadre of fully qualified Native teachers. However it is known that of the 37 students completing the two year training 24 have taught for at least one year and 13 (in some cases included in the 24) have completed their degrees. These thirteen graduates exceed the total number of Native teachers in the Province when the project began.

The University of Lethbridge near the southern border of the province has much of the character of a liberal arts college, a small institution in a small city -- clear advantage in providing an educational milieu for Native students. The University of Lethbridge has enjoyed some government support for innovative endeavours in general and one of these has

been the creation of a department of Native American Studies. The planning and implementation of the department, from the beginning, has been conducted in association with the Blackfoot people of the nearby Blood Reservation. With six thousand people this reservation is the largest in Alberta and has provided the majority of the Native students at The University of Lethbridge. Professor Leroy Littlebear, Chairman of the Department is a member of the Blood band as is one other member of his almost exclusively Native staff. As with other Native studies departments in Canada the majority of the students in the department are non-Native but the Department provides nevertheless a strong Indian presence at the University of Lethbridge and includes on its staff a full-time advisor to students who assists in the recruitment and general support of Native students in Lethbridge. Since the establishment of the Deparment 23 Native students have graduated in all disciplines at the University of Lethbridge.

Finally, at The University of Calgary, in 1972, a province-wide Indian steering committee opted for what was a departure from the other pioneer projects in Canada (e.g. at the University of Saskatchewan and later at The University of Alberta). It was decided not to attempt to secure a modified, shortened program for Native students but to provide support services for students attempting regular programs.

For a number of years the existence of the tutoring service was used to justify admission of students with less than standard qualifications but in early 1980 the University was found to be in contravention of Alberta's human rights legislation which does not permit affirmative action. The University was instructed to terminate concessions to Natives in the matter of admissions

and in addition to terminate the Native Students Services.

Circumstances however have blunted the ill effects partly through some amendments to the Individual Rights Protection Act in May 1980 and partly because during the eight years of the project there has been some improvement in Native schooling. A few young matriculated students now reach The University of Calgary each year (that most don't succeed at the University is another story); a substantial number of mature students can now meet the admission requirements in English and a second language and finally others can be started on their way as "unclassified" non-degree students, a newly created admission category.

Through trial and error the Native Students Services have evolved to the current fairly stable operation. The early errors included compulsory scheduled tutorial sessions which any one in the field would now know was incompatible with Indian culture, especially male Indian culture. Part-time staff were also used and their discontinuous availability was unacceptable to students. Two full time tutor/advisors (one a Native person) now assist forty to fifty on-campus students spread through several disciplines including medicine and engineering but with 70% of graduates to date in Education and with the second concentration in Social Welfare. Apart from a small area for administration and a research and development office, space allows for contiguous a study area, a student club office, tutor's office and a student lounge. the Red Lodge. This complex provides an area of very great significance to many of the Native students and offers some substitute for the support systems (including that of the extended family) which are lost when the students move to the city. The Red Lodge has been described as "a refuge from the jungle of the city", as "a safe place from which to operate on the larger scene"

of the campus and as "my home", this last by a graduating single parent whose shifting family responsibilities include care of her own baby and of a grandson, both of whom are fully established members of the informal Red Lodge community. A baby's playpen is a well used item of furniture.

Of the thirty-eight graduates since 1976 all are working in the service of their people except for a small number with only minor or indirect connection, e.g. one works for a law firm handling Indian Association affairs and three are social workers in circumstances where Indians are only occasional clients. Of the overwhelming majority who work directly with Native persons about half have gone home to their own people. This constitutes a reversal of earlier practice.* Until recently the very small number of Canadian Indians achieving post-secondary education in most cases sought employment on a reserve other than their own if not away from the reserves entirely. As is well known knowledge and wisdom belong to the Elders in Indian cultures and there is inherent in the advanced knowledge of the young, at the very least, a major source of tension.

The home to which the Native student returns may be variously defined yet still provide sensations of home for the new graduate. Thirteen graduates of The University of Calgary (two of them with social work degrees) either took their first positions on the reserves which they left to achieve their degrees or are teaching in the public school attended by children of their home area. In addition, one highly assimilated urban Indian having

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* See Evelyn Moore-Eyman, "You Can Go Home Again", Canadian Education Vol. 21/No. 1/Spring 1981, pp. 16-19.

undertaken a year of his degree program on a reserve outside Calgary opted to seek employment on the reserve to which he legally belonged and now, despite an initial lack of the Native language, is a resident of his reserve.

Still another student was without a home anywhere. She had been captured with her siblings by the R.C.M.P. and taken to a residential school when she was six years old. When she emerged ten years later she had not been outside the residences at all except for one three week period; her family had been destroyed by the enforced loss of its children, her mother killed in a drunken brawl; some of her siblings ended on "skid row"; twenty years of seeking ultimately allowed her to locate most of her family distributed through the three western provinces; just before his death she found and became reconciled with her father whom she had believed to have abandoned her. On her appointment to a small northern Alberta community 35 miles from the original residential school she found many of her fellow inmates. They were now the parents of the children she taught. Within the first two months of teaching, through her walks in the community, she renewed long lost friendships and had become acquainted with the parents of all 26 children in her class. Despite the forced acculturation attempted by the residential school with its punishments for use of the Native tongue she had retained the Cree language and could use it in the school and in the community. For the first time in some thirty years since her capture by the R.C.M.P. she had the joyous feeling of being "home".

There is in general, then, among new appointees in their home communities an elan, a heightened sense of being home and being able to serve in an important way. Only time will tell whether these good feelings

can stand the test of time and accumulating stresses including the assimilationist policies of certain employers.

What is there in the recent situation which has contributed to the capacity to return home? The following appear to be factors:

(i) There is a good deal of evidence of growing consciousness among Native peoples of their need for professional services. As group after group takes over some control of its own affairs from the Department of Indian Affairs white professionals are employed by Indian organizations but with a wide consensus among Indian groups that this should be an interim measure only.

(ii) To a very large extent the Native students come from the leadership families from their communities. Most who have been able to persist through to graduation are from the leadership families and can anticipate a leadership role for themselves. There is in fact an emerging tendency for the graduates to be unable to continue with their first professional plans and to move to fill the gaps in the leadership cadre. Presumably only the creation of a sufficient pool of graduates can solve this problem.

(iii) Pressure has been exerted by Indian groups to secure at the universities special programs or support services which would recruit and support Native students for whom the high school system had been so in appropriate. The Native Students Services at The University of Calgary resulted

largely from the search of the Saddle Lake Indians for teacher education for their own young people. A Province-wide Native steering committee guided the formative years of the project on the campus. Where courses were taken to reserves on the initiative of Indian groups, as at Morley and Hobbema, the details of the programs were planned in consultation with the education committees appointed by the tribal administration. No student was admitted without the recommendation of the tribal authorities (at the same time of course no qualified student was refused admission). This involvement of the reserves has contributed I believe to the choice of the graduates to work in their home communities. In addition a number of the Elders have been associated with the projects, a relationship much stronger on the reserves than on the campus. This may well have contributed to some lessening of tension for the young graduate, without of course fully eliminating the stress involved in their "non-cultural" roles. It would seem that all funding schemes for post school education for Native students should ensure resources for adequate involvement of the communities and especially of the Elders of those communities.

(iv) Rather than becoming more uni-directionally acculturated to the majority society recent Native graduates at The University of Calgary (and perhaps elsewhere) appear to be more fully

bi-cultural than previously.

The students efficacy in the majority society has obviously increased. The Native students' command of English has improved so that they can pass the University's tests in English and write acceptable term papers and examinations. The students have demonstrated that they have the knowledge necessary for a degree (an accomplishment, it should be remembered that is limited to a small proportion of the total population of the majority society). At the same time the four to five years of use of the Red Lodge, has contributed to the students' examination of their dual identities as Indians and as Canadians. It appears to have led for many to a clearer assertion of the Indian element of their bi-culturalism.

Thus, by the provision of the Red Lodge, the University appears to have contributed to the sense of legitimacy, of "Indianness" in the urban and academic worlds. The Calgary experience suggests a more fully developed bi-culturalism can result from a facility which beginning students describe as a "refuge" and where some of the more senior students appear to find the means to come to terms with their bi-cultural identities. It would seem therefore that Native education projects should firmly reject criticism that separate facilities create undesirable ghettos.

The Native Students Services has long declared its affinity with those Canadian Indian leaders, such as Chief John Snow, of the neighbouring Stoney tribe who reject assimilation, who find the isolationism of mere "cultural difference" unrealistic and who therefore advocate bi-culturalism. But the meaning, process and implications of biculturalism for the North American Indian are far from clear (as all who have searched the current literature well know).

As a means to further insight the Native Students Services in 1980 held a small study conference in which nine Native informants judged to operate effectively in both Native and mainstream cultures presented their personal stories of "growing up bi-cultural". The informants ranged from an older person with only elementary education to recent graduates but a clear pattern emerged. Initial establishment of Indian culture was followed by a period of immersion in mainstream culture through, variously, school, work, skid-row and university until Indianness was again, at varying life stages, re-asserted or even re-learned. Only with the last phase came a viable life.

It appears that the Red Lodge of the Native Students Services, has provided a milieu fostering legitimization of Indian identity within a mainstream institituion. While assisting students to some mastery of mainstream thinking processes and behavior patterns as required for university success it has apparently had the effect, over time, of fostering purposeful renewal of association with Native communities and has contributed to an assertion of Indian identity by those whose Indianness had appeared to have succumbed in large part to the pressures for assimilation inherent in federal and provincial the school systems.

The numbers are small yet, (only 43 have graduated). The conclusions are very tentative, but they are exciting. A major study, on these dimensions, across the Native education projects of this continent would be welcomed.

Title:

The "Support-Service" Approach to Native Indian Education.

Presenter:

Evelyn Moore-Eyman, University of Calgary

Presentation:

At Universities in the province of Alberta three models of native Indian teacher education have been developed. Each of the three differs in approach and operation. The three models are: 1) the Native Studies Department which operates on university campuses; 2) the outreach Special Program; and 3) the Support-Service approach which operates both on and off campus. Each model is briefly described and evaluated in terms of its effectiveness in meeting student needs.

The Support-Service model at the University of Calgary is examined in detail. Research evidence is presented on the impact of this model on strengthening the students'sense of identity and self-worth as a native person. Conclusions are drawn as to the approach of the program on producing qualified graduates who are able to function well in both Indian and non-Indian socio-cultural settings. Results point strongly toward the reversal of a commonly held belief that native Indian university graduates "can't go home again." Evidence is presented on the acceptance of the graduates and of the program by native Indian communities in Alberta.